

Diary Ben Franklin Summer Institute 2010

By Mads A. Danielsen, Norway



Before the trip. In April 2010 I was selected by the U.S. Embassy in Oslo as the Norwegian representative to the Ben Franklin Summer Institute 2010. BFTF is a leadership and cultural exchange program for youth mainly taking place at Wake Forest university in North Carolina, funded by the U.S. State Department. Altogether, there will be one participant (15-18 years old) from each European country and 11 from different states in the U.S.. You have no idea how excited I was – I kept on smiling for days! I spent the

U.S. Ambassador Barry B. White next two months on preparations and creating a Ben Franklin Facebook group, to which I invited all the fellows that I managed to find. Finally, on July 2nd, I departed from Oslo to the U.S..

July 3. 2010 – Day 1

After 15 hours of traveling, I'm finally at Wake Forest University in North Carolina. We were greeted by members of the staff, among others Dr. Allan Louden and Dr. Linda Petrou, who are the leaders of BFTF. The first thing they said was: *"Hi, you're Mads, right? You're the one who created the*



Facebook group!" Then I went outside the dorm, where most of the other fellows relaxed and socialized. Scout from Alabama told me to introduce myself. I said that *"I'm Mads from Norway, and I'm the guy who created and organizes the Ben Franklin Facebook Page."* Through Facebook I was the first person to get in touch with most of the fellows – Lena from Germany actually got to know that she was the German fellow when I contacted her. I had been in touch with most of the fellows for a long time, sometimes chatting for hours at night! It was fantastic to finally meet them in real person. For instance I met Daniel from Moldova, who would be my roommate for 3 weeks. He turned out to be a really cool guy.



Dr. Louden and I in front of the dorms

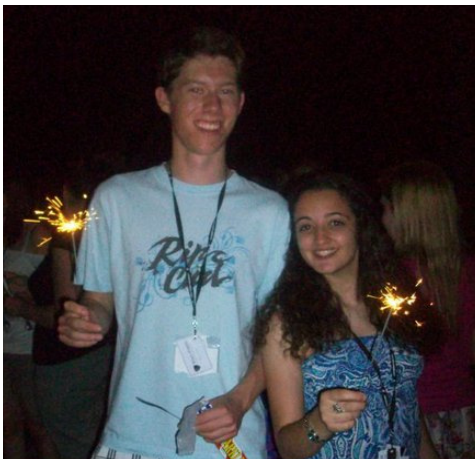


July 4. 2010 – Day 2

I will provide you with a brief peek into my life as a BFTF fellow. The Collins dormitory is what we call home. Each fellow lives here with a roommate, sharing a common area where we often talk about each others' countries and cultures, and sometimes just relax! From

the dorms, we have a short walk before we reach the classrooms, located in Carswell Hall. Of course, we also have free time to roam the Wake Forest campus and take in the beautiful Summer atmosphere of North Carolina. It is extremely hot for a Norwegian, almost 95 Fahrenheit in average (approximately 35° C).

Today is July 4th, the American Independence Day. We started the day with breakfast in “the Pit” (the WFU canteen) where they served typical American breakfast: egg and bacon, scrambled eggs, pancakes with syrup and a bunch of other traditional American dishes. After breakfast we divided into groups. My group traveled to the local Jewish Synagogue. We were welcomed by the Rabbi, who told us about Jewish history, rituals and traditions. He also taught us about the Torah, the Jew's most important holy text. In addition, we learned about the unique “memory tables.” These are tables on the walls which the names of dead Jews are written, and on the day of a person's death the name tag is illuminated.



Tonight we got to experience the celebration of the American Independence Day, which is a day very important to Americans and to world history. We started with a barbecue picnic in the park with traditional American hamburgers and hot dogs on the menu. In the evening we celebrated with sparklers and desert (a delicious apple pie and muffins). The only disappointment of the day was that we didn't get to see any of the fireworks. Because of the financial crisis, several counties cut their fireworks budget, and apparently Winston-Salem is one of them.

July 5. 2010 – Day 3

The first class of BFTF was *Comparative constitutionalism* with Dr. John Dinan. In this class we reviewed the American Bill of Rights and compared the constitutions and political systems of our countries with the U.S. After lunch we had *Citizenship and conflicts* class with Dr. Alessandra Beasley Von Burg. We used examples from our own countries when we talked about relevant conflicts and political topics, for instance the question whether or not Turkey should become a member of the European Union. I learned A LOT, especially from the other fellows. I believe this to be an important part of the program: To learn from each other by exchanging information and experience.

In the evening there was a “Scavenger hunt”. Each group was tasked to find 40 different places on campus. My group, team “Kick Ass”, consisted of Olivier from Belgium, Mohamed from Florida and Fran from Croatia. We ran like madmen around campus and managed to find all places except for one (!!!). It was a really good experience in intercultural cooperation!



July 6. 2010 – Day 4

In Comparative Constitutionalism class we were divided into four groups that were tasked to make their own Bill of Rights. This was both interesting and quite challenging, since we had to discuss whether or not to add rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of carrying arms and the right to a fair trial by a jury. In Documentary Theory & Practice Jon Bougher taught us about the history of documentary film and propaganda. We learned for instance about Edison, the Lumiere brothers and German and U.S. WW2 propaganda films. If I didn't know the history of Adolf Hitler on beforehand, I might actually be convinced by the German

propaganda into thinking of him as a great leader. Fortunately, we all new better, but it was really interesting and quite scaring to see how propaganda can be used to persuade, almost “brain wash” people.

In the evening we watched Jon Bougher's documentary about deworming people in Haiti. It was an amazing film that I believe touched us all. The film was about Haiti and how people in Haiti are infected with worms that consume all their nutrition. The documentary told the story of a group of people that distributed free medicine both before, during and after the fatal earthquake that hit Haiti on the 12th of January 2010. I was surprised to learn that a few hundred thousand dollars would be enough to deworm the entire population of Haiti.

July 7. 2010 – Day 6

During *comparative constitutionalism* class we debated whether or not the U.S. constitution is a good model for new emerging democracies. We were divided into three different groups: One group positive to the statement, another group negative, and the last group was to judge the two other groups and decide which team argued the best. I was a member of the group tasked to argue why the U.S. Constitution should not be a model for the constitutions of emerging democracies. Our strategy was to make doubt about whether or not the U.S. Constitution is concrete enough in today's society. We did so by for instance arguing that the electoral college allows the possibility of electing presidents who do not win the majority of votes. I believe we managed to make the judges insecure and that this is the reason why my group won! Personally I believe that most parts of the U.S. Constitution should be adopted by an emerging new democracy, I'm simply critical of a few amendments, like for instance the right to carry arms (Norwegians in general are very critical to this amendment).

After lunch we had a *Citizenship and conflict class*. We were divided into four different groups that each represented an imaginary country: North, South, East and

West. I was elected prime minister of the proud nation of “East”. I, the “prime minister”, and my fellow “ministers,” “advisers” and “members of the parliament” had to make a policy before we started negotiations for world peace. We had to answer questions like what did we think about the dictatorship in the North? Who did we want to make alliances with? What kind of alliances would we make? Did we want to exchange students, join military forces or make neutrality treaties? Would we like to go to war? Questions that are relevant for most diplomats and politician today.

Today we discovered that BFTF is not the only summer camp at the WFU campus. Attending summer camp appears to be a typical American tradition. Many children and youth spend the summer at for instance baseball camp, football camp, environmental sustainability camp, etc. We had a strange experience with one of the camps at WFU: Every time we finished our meals and prepared to carry our dishes to the washing station, some boys and girls suddenly appeared and asked if they could please carry it for us. It turned out that they were participants at a christian summer camp, and that a part of their duties were to help others as much as possible during their stay. I was impressed, I don't believe many Norwegians teen agers would do such a kind act of helpfulness to a total stranger.

In the evening we were all present for the screening of David Hafter’s documentary *Civil Indigent*. David's film focused on the strife of the homeless in Gainsville, Flordia, ranked as one of the worst places in America to live as a homeless. Following the exploits of Pat, a homeless advocate, *Civil Indigent* focused on balancing the conflicted interests between combating hunger and maintaining financial interests in the surrounding area. Do businesses have the right to remove the homeless from the surrounding area in order to protect their interests? How do local government officials solve a monumental problem with limited resources? Roars of laughter erupted throughout the audience as Pat maintained a jovial attitude when fighting for the basic needs of the poor. Following the film, we were all eager to ask

questions on the status of homelessness in America, we discussed the status of homelessness around the world and the need to redouble efforts against poverty. In America it is mostly NGO's and churches that work to help poor people, while in Norway the government mostly takes this responsibility.

July 8. 2010 – Day 6



Today we traveled to the Peace Heaven Baptist Church, where we prepared an international dinner. I made “Smoked Norwegian Salmon and Scrambled Eggs with Chives”, which was really popular! It was two of the most hectic hours in my life, with 25-30 fellows using the same kitchen to prepare a wide range of dishes. But it was also an important cultural experience, and we learned a lot about cooperation between people of different nationalities and cultures.

When we returned to the dorms I helped Heqiqet, the fellow from Azerbaijan, to make a Facebook account. She told me that the Internet connection in most of Azerbaijan is very bad, but hopefully we'll be able to stay in touch through Facebook after BFTE.

July 9. 2010 – Day 7

In *citizenship and conflict* class we had the final summit of the “North – East – South – West” game. I, as the prime minister of the proud nation of East, feel that my group did a marvelous job to protect the interests of our “country” at the same time as we worked for peace, stability and prosperity among all the nations. Unfortunately, the authoritarian regime of North declared war against us. Fortunately, we had made a military defense alliance with the South and a neutrality pact with the West, so I believe poor North will be kind of screwed if they dare attack us...

July 10. 2010 – Day 8

Today we woke up early in order to take the bus to the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The trip was supposed to take 7 – 8 hours, but it lasted for almost 12 hours!!! Some of us, me included, were going to a baseball match, the local Phillis vs Cincinnati Reds from Ohio. We were 2 - 3 hours late because of traffic, but fortunately baseball games actually last for 4-5 hours. It was a really cool experience. Baseball is a part of American culture, just imagine 50 000 people gathered in one gigantic station (compared to Norwegian stadiums), cheering, applauding and “buuing” at the same time. It was simply fantastic!



July 11. 2010 – Day 9

Today we visited the Independence Hall and the Constitution Center. We learned a lot about the U.S. Constitution, even more than what we had already learned in Constitution class at WFU. This extremely important historical building in downtown Philadelphia was breathtaking! It was difficult to imagine that one of the most important documents in world history was written down in this house.



After the guided tours in Philadelphia we traveled by bus to Washington D.C, to the George Washington University dorms. We live at the top floor, and I share room with the same people as at the Philadelphia hotel (Patrick from Florida, Daniel from Moldova and Andreas from Cyprus).



After we had unpacked our luggage, a group of us went to explore D.C. It turned out that our dorm were only 600-700 meters from the White House, so we went there and took pictures. The White House and the Washington monument at night are very impressive, I'm glad we got to see these famous sites in such a good setting.

July 12. 2010 – Day 10

Today we visited the U.S. State Department, where we met several diplomats and an under-secretary of State. It was interesting to learn about the U.S. relations to other countries. For instance, I learned that the U.S consider our participation in the war in Afghanistan, our energy expertise (hydro power, oil and gas), the Government Pension Fund of Norway (“the oil fund”) and our common interest in human rights as the most important issues in the Norway – U.S. relations.

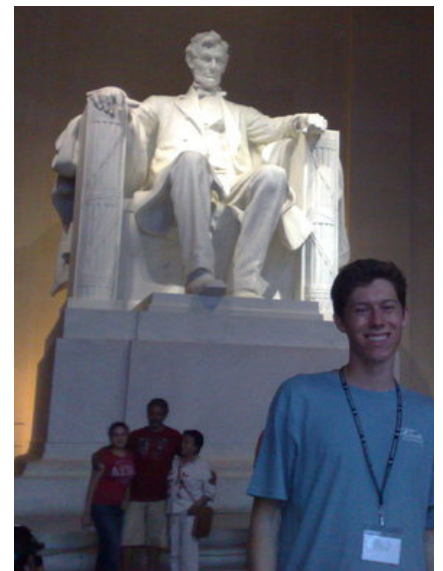


Andreas (Cyprus), Leyla (Austria) and I before departing



Afterward we traveled straight to George Mason University. There we had a simulation on the Copenhagen Accords (COP15) together with the Asian BFTF group. My group represented the U.S. It consisted of only two Americans, while the others came from countries like Romania, Poland, Afghanistan and Pakistan. It was very interesting to cooperate with people from so many completely different cultures. One of our statements, which I presented, was that *“The U.S. has spent a lot of money on green house gas research, what have any of the other countries done?”* This was quite controversial, both the “European Union”, “G77” (the 77 poorest countries in the world) and “BASIC” (China, South Africa, etc) were furious. But we wanted to make the controversial statements, so the other countries perhaps would start to actually act themselves. Unfortunately, the simulation ended in “disaster” as the BASIC countries walked out because they didn't want to cut in their emissions, since this would decrease the growth in their economies.

After the simulation we all had dinner at an Iranian restaurant, which catered Middle Eastern delicacies. As the day ended, we had a scavenger hunt at the National Mall, where many of the most famous monuments in D.C. are situated.





July 13. 2010 – Day 11

Today we went to the National Press Club, which is a very prestigious club for journalists. On our way we walked past the White House. There were actually not that many security guards (that we were able to see), and we wondered what it would be like



to climb over the fence and go across the garden into the White House. Some of us actually asked one of the security guards. She laughed, and said we wouldn't get very far: She showed us the snipers that sat on the roof of the White House. Still, it was nice to fantasize about going to the White House to say hallo to President Obama.

July 14. 2010 – Day 12

We visited the National Press Club today as well. We had this really interesting speaker, Ellen Ratner, who is a White House correspondent and a Liberal Fox News Commentator. She inspired not only me, but many of the other fellows into wanting to become a journalist. She encouraged critical thinking and provided valuable insights into the world of journalism. Ratner said that those of us who wish to pursue journalism should find a niche that no one has become an expert on yet, and then become a world expert in that area so that at some point this knowledge will be

sought out, and a job offer may likely follow. Ratner also declared that no country could be free without also having a free press. Then it was interesting to learn from the next speaker, professor W. Joseph Campbell, that the Nordic countries are ranked as the countries with the freest press, with Norway ranked as number one.

Later in the day we visited the renowned D. C. newspaper *The Washington Times*. There we met prof. Dinan's brother, who is a senior journalist and a Congress reporter. He talked about his newspaper, the political situation in D.C. and how journalists encounter it.

July 15. 2010 – Day 13

Today was the last day at the National Press Club. The President of the Washington Center and the CEO of C-SPAN talked about media and how it is important for a democracy, and how it is important that if you got a good idea, use it and work hard.

Later we visited the Newseum, a museum for news and journalism. We learned about the history of journalism



and how journalists work with news both in TV, radio and newspapers. Hillary (Malta) and I even got to “make” some news ourselves and pretend that we were news reporters.



There was also a Pulitzer Prize photo exhibition, where we could see some of the most important and influential pictures in modern history.

After the museum I went together with Chiara (Luxemburg), Lena (Germany), Aleksandra (Poland) and Leyla (Austria) to the National Archives of the United

States of America and the Natural Historical museum. There we saw the original Constitution, Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights.

In the evening I went to Georgetown with Hillary (Malta), Snæfríður, better know as “Sneya” (Iceland), Ivan (Bulgaria), Sayanna (Arizona) and Fran (Croatia). Georgetown is a very charming part of Washington D.C., best known for it's elite university and picturesque houses. We became tired



of walking for hours all day, so we really enjoyed to sit down and have dinner at a nice restaurant named UNO. They actually had Norwegian salmon on the menu.

July 16. 2010 – Day 14

Early in the morning we departed from D.C. to Mount Vernon in Virginia. Mt. Vernon is the estate of George Washington, the first President of the United States. It is a magnificent area, but it was almost 100 Fahrenheit, so at least we who come from the Nordic countries had trouble walking around without almost passing out!

In the evening we arrived in Williamsburg, Virginia, an historic city. We stayed at a hotel with a swimming pool! It was wonderful to finally have some time to just enjoy life and swim a little! At night Andreas from Cyprus made a dance party remix song of the sentence “Hi, my name is Mads and I come from Norway”. Apparently, I pronounced this sentence in such a weird and funny way that people took notice. Anyway, we all got a really good laugh, me included. At least the 15 first minutes. After a while everybody started to say “Hi, Mads, from Norway” in a rather annoying way every time we met. The worst part is, they continued to do so for the rest of the stay! It has officially become known as “the Mads effect”.

July 17. 2010 – Day 15

Today we visited the Busch Gardens amusement park in Williamsburg. It was a great experience, especially since it was our first day without any classes. We had lots of fun, riding real American roller coasters and other amusing amusements for four hours.



After the Busch Gardens we traveled by bus for 7 hours back to Wake Forest. When we arrived at campus we met our host family for the first time. My host buddy will be

Mohamed from Florida, and we will stay with Tom and Donna Baker and their lovely dog Buddy for the next 10 days. Their house is really nice with a large garden in High Point, 30 minutes from campus.



Mohammed and I got our own rooms with a huge bed

Mohamed, Donna, Tom, Buddy and I in front of the house and even a TV! In Norway, it is not very common with a TV in the bedroom, so this was really cool!

July 18. 2010 – Day 16

Today we went to a service with Mr. and Mrs. Baker's Presbyterian congregation. Donna, who is very good singer, is a member of the church choir. The service was very interesting. The preacher, educated at Harvard, had some very good and valid opinions on the ten commandments.

After the service Tom took us to a gigantic food store, where we bought lunch. The size of the building was enormous, nothing in Norway could possibly be compared. And yet we had not visited a Wal-Mart!

Afterwards we traveled to the mountains, where we drove around for several hours. We had dinner in the charming small city “The Blowing Rock”.

July 19. 2010 – Day 17

Today we chose what group we will work with for the next two weeks. I joined the documentary group, with main responsibility to make a documentary about an environmental issue. I was paired with Efthymios from Greece. We're really looking forward to learn how to make a documentary!

After dinner I gave Tom and Donna a few gifts: Norwegian dark chocolate, a book about Norway (with some magnificent pictures), and a beautiful traditional “*ostehøvel*” (cheese slicer), which is a Norwegian invention.

July 20. 2010 – Day 18

Today 30 of us went to the Second Harvest Bank (<http://www.hungernwnc.org/>), a organization that distributes food to people in need. This was a true class in civic engagement. I learned that formal volunteering is more common in the U.S. than in Norway. In Norway much of the work that is taken care of through civic engagement the U.S. is taken care of by the government.

I had a special cultural experience today. The list of today's main news at NBC and Fox News was kind of both surprising and very different from what I'm used to. The main story today was Lindsay Lohan going to jail. They described EVERYTHING, no details were left out – it was in my opinion just sad. The next headline was about Mel Gibson, who recently went crazy and violent towards his wife. The news anchors

and commentators named him an --- ---- over and over again. I believed there were more important things to inform Americans about.

Btw, my very good friend Hillary from Malta managed to collect all the 50 different quarters today (American coins worth 0,25 USD each). Each quarter is engraved with an image of a U.S. state. I helped her a lot by giving her almost all of my quarters!

July 21. 2010 – Day 19

Today I didn't have any civic engagement classes, so I just worked on my documentary together with Efthymios for almost 4 hours. It takes a lot of time to edit. It was sometimes rather challenging to work with



Efthymios – we discussed, almost argued a lot, both having very strong opinions.

July 22. 2010 – Day 20

This morning we met with children from the Salvation Army. The fellows from the Nordic countries entertained them in the Annenberg auditorium. The group consisted of Kenneth



and myself from Norway, Rosa from Finland, Sneya from Iceland, Vanessa from Denmark, Rytis from Lithuania and Karoline from Estonia. We performed the famous fairytale “*The Emperors New Clothes*” by the Danish writer H. C. Andersen – and I

was the emperor! Fortunately, I didn't have to undress (I think some parents would have sued us if I did). The play was actually so successful that we were asked to perform at several other occasions.

Later most of us went to the Community Garden and some to the Fresh Market. I was one of the six fellows who went to The Fresh Market. TFM is a rather exclusive grocery store that gives food to charity. Our task was to find, sort and pack the food and then bring it to one of the local Presbyterian churches in Winston-Salem. They distribute the food to families with low income.

During our stay with Mr. and Mrs. Baker we had a great time, especially when discussing and explaining the Norwegian and Moroccan society and culture.

July 23. 2010 – Day 21

Today we traveled to the Washington park in Old Salem, where we “cleaned” a river. It was a really dirty job, but I believe we did well.

Altogether, we found 10 tires and filled 58 bags of trash. This was kind of extreme, since we only



cleaned 200 meters of the river! According to the director of *W-S Storm Water*

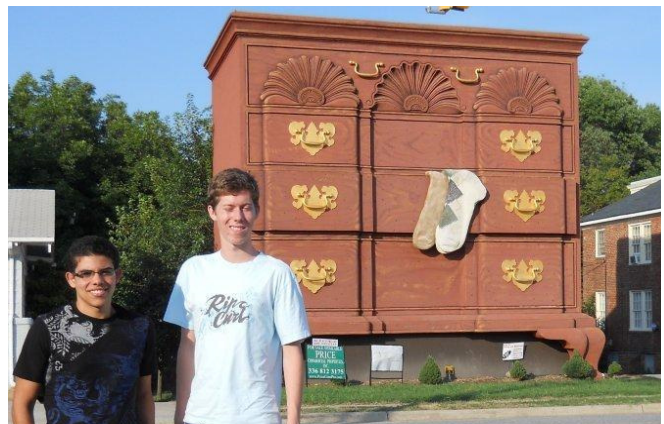
Authority, this is common in most urban areas around the world. Efthymios and I decided that the filming we did today will be the basis for our documentary. This is because we believe that pollution is a very serious topic in today's society.

Everything is bigger in the U.S. than in Norway: dishes, buildings, population, areal,

people, cloth sizes, stores and shops. Today we visited Sam's Club, a shopping market where you can buy everything you can imagine. All the items were gigantic because Sam's Club's main customers are restaurants. I was impressed when I found a can that was bigger than my head! In addition, I also found Norwegian salmon. It is kind of strange to discover that Norway is probably best known for it's fish.



Before dinner we drove around in High Point, where Tom showed us the gigantic furniture buildings. High Point is known as the “capital” of the furnishing industry.



July 24, 2010 – Day 22



Today we went to the North Carolina Zoo, which is known as one of the best zoos in the U.S.. Its the kind of zoo where the animals have a lot of space, so I really liked it. I hate the zoos where animals are stuffed into small cages! The zoo is divided into two main sections, Africa and North America. Therefor the zoo had for instance

bison, wolves, chimpanzees, lemurs, flamingos, rhinos, elephants, giraffes, orchestras, zebras, lions, gorillas and a huge aviary with dozens of beautiful, exotic birds. I especially liked the gorillas, it was amazing to see how similar they are to humans! They also had real Everglades (Florida) alligators, it was the first time I've ever seen alligators. I was very excited, but Mohamed didn't really care, since there are many of them in St. Petersburg, Florida, where he lives.

It is extremely hot today, almost 105 Fahrenheit. The climate in North Carolina is very hot and humid when compared to the Norwegian climate. Mohamed didn't bother at all. The climate is even hotter and more humid in Florida! I'm really impressed by Mohamed (Florida), Hillary (Malta) and Andreas (Cyprus), who live in parts of the world where it often is more than 40 degrees in the summer! In Norway we usually have between 20-25 degrees in the summer.

After the zoo we visited the University of North Carolina and Duke University. At UNC we picked up Mrs. Bakers daughter Mary. She studied for a few weeks in Copenhagen, so it was interesting to hear her opinion on Scandinavia. She said that Norway, Sweden and Denmark are definitely among the best countries in the world, but she also said that the Scandinavian model is probably the closest you get to communism that actually works. This is a statement that I'm going to remember!

July 25. 2010 – Day 23

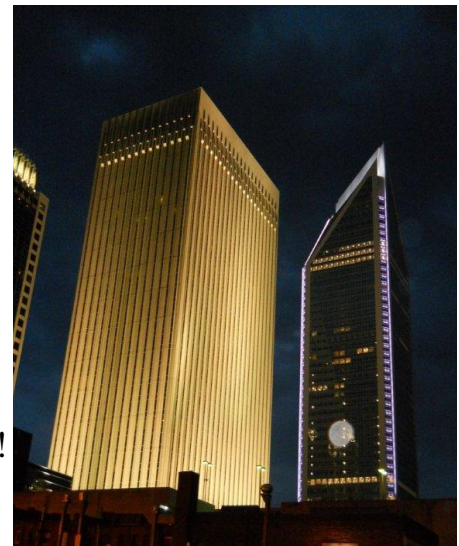
It's Sunday, and we once again went to the service at the local Presbyterian church. Afterwards we discussed, with Mohamed, the similarities between Christianity and Islam. It actually turns out these religions are not as different as one might think.

Later we visited a mall. I bought a nice watch and a cool sweater. The prices in the U.S. are in general much lower than in Norway. Now I understand that Norwegian taxes are not only very high, they are extremely high! When I told people what

clothes, food and gasoline cost in Norway, they almost didn't believe me. They thought I was joking when I told them that when you buy a car more than 50 percent of the price goes to the government in taxation.



In the evening we had a nice dinner with Linda and Sara Lilly, Tom's daughter and granddaughter. They were really nice, they showed us again how very kind and friendly Americans are. For dessert we had the biggest piece of cake that I've ever seen! Afterwards we went for a drive in Charlotte, the biggest city in North Carolina. There were some huge buildings there!



July 26. 2010 – Day 24

This is the first day back on campus. It was very sad to say god bye (for now) to Tom and Donna. Fortunately, we're going to meet again at the farewell dinner in three days.

In the middle of the day we all visited Salemtowne retirement community. Many of the fellows entertained the residents. Some fellows sang – Violetta sang a beautiful Russian song while playing guitar. Others danced – Narine danced a traditional Armenian dance. The Nordic group once again performed “*The Emperors New Clothes*”. It was all a huge success.

July 27. 2010 – Day 25



Today I had to get up really early because a few of us were going to the Shalom summer school in Winston-Salem. I went with Hillary (Malta), Sama (New York), Denisa (Slovakia), Noémie (Switzerland) and the mentor Kelsi (Montana). We introduced ourselves and our countries. The children (6-13 years old) were especially interested in the

fact that Norway have a king and a queen. Then we performed the play “The Emperors New Clothes”. We also played some traditional games from our countries and the kids taught us some traditional American games. Later, after “fighting” with 6-7 boys, I was so tired that I could barely stand on my feet. We actually entertained the kids for almost 5 hours (!!!). It was extremely exhausting, but also very meaningful, not to mention funny.

After lunch we continued to edit the documentary. It was kind of “challenging” to edit together with Efthymios. Apparently, it is a Greek tradition to spend a lot of time debating and disagreeing just for the sake of it. For instance. we disagreed on whether or not to use the song “Morgengry” (Morning rise) by the famous Norwegian composer Edward Grieg. But as the diplomats we are, we concluded that we would at least listen to it and see how it worked. It took us “only” a couple of days to reach that conclusion.

July 28. 2010 – Day 26

Today I didn't have to go to any civic engagement projects, which is really good because I am very tired after 3 ½ weeks with an intensive schedule. This break gave me time to finish the editing of the documentary.

In the evening we started to write good bye letters. We all got kind of depressed by doing so, some almost started to cry! After spending a month together 24/7, we have become best friends.

At night all the fellows “attacked” Kenneth's Facebook profile as a “revenge” for the strict security. The staff was afraid that we would leave the dorms, since it was the last night. We therefor bombarded Kenneth with hundreds of meaningless messages. One of my favorites is that the odds of dealing 13 cards of the same suit to each of 4 players is 2,235,197,406,895,366,368,301,599,999 to 1. I'm not quite sure if Kenneth found all the information interesting, but I do think he enjoyed the attention.

July 29. 2010 – Day 27

This is our last day together. All the groups presented the result of their projects. It was hilarious when Efthymios and I presented our documentary, which is named *Saving The River*. The rumor about us “arguing” had spread, so everyone wanted us to show them! Unfortunately (for them) Efthymios and I are best friends by now!



In the evening we had a formal farewell dinner. There I met Donna and Tom again. After dinner the fellows entertained the guests. I participated two times: First I performed a stand up comedy about how people say “Hi, I'm Mads, from Norway” all the time. Later I played the emperor in “The Emperors New

Clothes” once again. In the end we all danced to Shakira's “waka waka” song. It was really sad in the end, with speeches that made people cry.



After the farewell dinner all the fellows and mentors had a “kitch party”. At a kitch party you are supposed to dress up as stupid and/or hilarious as possible. I dressed up like some kind of douche dude from the 80s. I felt really stupid, but we did have a lot of fun.

We didn't go to bed before REALLY late, because we had to say goodbye to Narine before she as the first person went to the airport. So we all stayed together in the main hall all nigh – sleeping, write good bye letters and cry!



July 30. 2010 – Day 28

I traveled to Greensboro airport at 11.45, after saying goodbye to everyone except the 10 fellows that also were going to Philadelphia. It was heartbreaking to say goodbye to the people I had spent all my time with for the last month. When we arrived at the airport we were met with



Chiara (Luxembourg) and I saying good bye

an unpleasant surprise: The flight to Philadelphia was canceled, because a bird flew into the engines and destroyed one of the instruments. We got another flight, but unfortunately four of us were too late. Rosa from Finland, Noémie from Switzerland, Pavel from Ukraine and I didn't get a flight before the next day, so we had to go back to Wake Forest for one more night.



In the morning Rosa, Noémie and I took a flight to Charlotte and from Charlotte to Frankfurt. In Frankfurt we said good bye and took a flight back to our home countries. I had to wait in Frankfurt for 7 hours, but finally, after an extremely long and exhausting trip, I was safely back in good old Norway!

After I came home I've stayed in touch with all the other fellows through Facebook, MSN, ooVoo and Skype. We video chat a lot. The friends I made in the U.S. this summer are among the best friends I've ever had and will ever have. I'm extremely thankful for the opportunity given to me by the U.S. Embassy in Norway when they selected me as their representative to BFTF 2010.



This fall I went to Cyprus on a seminar about European education. I used this opportunity to visit my very good friend Andreas and stay with him and his family for a couple of days. I even got to visit his school, and we had a presentation about the Ben Franklin Summer Institute for his entire school.

In the last week of December, 5 fellows will come and stay with me for one week at a small reunion. My guests are Rosa from Finland, Sneya from Iceland, Olivier from Belgium, Hillary from Malta and Andreas from Cyprus. We're not only planning to have a lot of fun, but we'll also visit the Norwegian Parliament and perhaps get a tour by members of parliament, visit the U.S. Embassy, have a presentation about BFTF for my entire school, visit the Nobel Peace Center, and much more. I can't wait until they arrive!

But most of all, I look forward to meet all the BFTF 2010 alumni later in life. From now on I will use every opportunity to visit my BFTF friends. We certainly have become friends for life.

